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supporters must convince you of that compelling case. To that end, I'd like to touch on a few points. First, we have fallen behind our neighboring states. In many Nebraska schools, teachers salaries are lagging behind our regional average. If we look at salaries in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Colorado and Wyoming, and compare Nebraska's growth in salaries to their growth in salaries, we see that our school systems are not increasing teachers salaries quickly enough just to keep up. In fact, we are behind our neighboring states. In 1994-95, we were \$1,720 behind the average for our region. In 1999-2000, we were \$3,400 behind. We are behind and we are falling farther behind. If we just wanted to fall no farther behind the regional salary, Nebraska salaries would have to grow more than 4.5 percent annually, just to keep up with our neighboring states. Average...as a state, our average annual increase was less than that, 4.29 percent from 1998 to 2000. Another point, the state does have a responsibility to address this issue. The Nebraska Constitution requires the Legislature to provide for public education. The Legislature authorizes school districts for this purpose. This arrangement implements local control. Remember that local control exists because the Legislature authorizes it. When the Legislature created local school districts, it didn't abdicate its responsibility and its prerogative to take an active interest in public school issues. Thus the state requires districts to operate under a variety of statutorily-imposed restrictions. Thus also, the state creates funds and administers the formula for distribution of state funds to local public districts. I think that the state has an obvious and vital obligation to address local school issues and teachers salaries are one of those. If local control...

SPEAKER KRISTENSEN: One minute.

SENATOR RAIKES: ...yields decisions that do not take advantage of opportunities for utilizing local resources, then I think it's the Legislature prerogative and responsibility to take action. Indeed it might even be argued that the Legislature's imposition of budget limits demonstrates this principle. Limits allow local districts to spend up to a certain amount and no more unless the voters authorize exceeding the limit. Clearly, the Legislature may tell local districts that they are spending